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tion by the singularity of their style, and the richness and depth of their matter. Among these may be mentioned particularly those on *Characteristics* and the *Life of Burns* in the *Edinburgh Review*, and on *Goethe* in the *Foreign Quarterly*. We have been partly led to take this notice of the work before us by the wish, which the author expresses, that a knowledge of his labors might penetrate into the Far West. We take pleasure in introducing to the American public a writer, whose name is yet in a great measure unknown among us, but who is destined, we think, to occupy a large space in the literary world. We have heard it intimated, that Mr. Carlyle has it in contemplation to visit this country, and we can venture to assure him, that, should he carry this intention into effect, he will meet with a cordial welcome. If his conversation should prove as agreeable as his writings, and he should feel a disposition to take up his abode in the "Far West," we have little doubt that he may find in some one of the hundred universities of our country, a *Weissnichtwo*, at which he may profess his favorite science of Things-in-General with even more satisfaction and advantage, than in the *Edinburgh Review* or *Fraser's Magazine*.

ART. X. — *Worcester's Dictionary.*

A Comprehensive Pronouncing and Explanatory Dictionary of the English Language ; with Pronouncing Vocabularies of Classical, Scripture and Modern Geographical Names. By J. E. WORCESTER. Carefully revised and enlarged. Boston. 1835.

MR. WORCESTER is not one of those persons who are disposed to shrink from labor ; on the contrary, he appears to love hard work for its own sake, and to be led by inclination to those objects of pursuit, in which most men are with difficulty induced to engage by the urgency of some controlling motive. We have already had occasion more than once to draw the attention of our readers to the results of his industry. Nearly twenty years ago, he became known to the public by his geographical researches. His *Universal Gazetteer* was

published in 1817, and a second edition of it but a few years after. This was a very comprehensive and valuable work, and met with as favorable a reception, as could well be anticipated for any of the same dimensions ; indeed, we are inclined to believe that the author would find his account in publishing another edition of it at the present time, with such improvements and additions as the change of circumstances might require. To this succeeded a *Gazetteer of the United States*, and the *Elements of Geography* ; the last obtained a very extensive circulation, and is now, we believe, used in many of our schools as a manual of the branch of science of which it treats. All the publications which we have named required a minute accuracy, as well as a wide extent of investigation ; the character which they all acquired sufficiently shews that they were executed with judgment and ability ; for this is a department, in which the deficiencies of an author are not to be concealed for any length of time, and are by no means easily forgiven. To these succeeded the *Elements of History* and the *Historical Atlas*. Passing from this field, in which his success had been quite flattering, Mr. Worcester entered upon another, not less laborious, nor demanding less attention and fidelity, — that of a lexicographer. The first results of his labor in this line were displayed by his publication of *Johnson's Dictionary*, as improved by Todd and abridged by Chalmers. While engaged in the preparation of that work, he formed the plan of the *Comprehensive Dictionary*, which is now before us ; but the execution of it was postponed for a season, in consequence of an engagement into which he had entered to prepare an abridgment of the *American Dictionary of Dr. Webster*. When he had completed this engagement, he resumed his own plan, and published the work about five years ago. Several impressions of it have since been called for, and he has repeatedly revised and enlarged it with much expense of time and labor, until it has assumed the form in which it now appears. The *Elementary Dictionary* is the last of his publications. In the mean time, Mr. Worcester is understood to have been the editor of the *American Almanac*, since the first year of its publication, and to have prepared all its contents, with the exception of the astronomical department ; and this is no mean title to distinction ; for there are very few works, in which so

much information, of a kind not easily accessible, is presented with so much authenticity. In all his publications, he has exhibited a conscientious love of accuracy, as well as intelligence, which has stamped them all with a superior value in the estimation of those whose favorable judgment in matters of the sort is most to be desired.

We confess that we look with respect upon men of industry and talent, who are willing to devote themselves to the investigation of subjects, in which the exhibition of those qualities is very slow to be appreciated, because there is little in the result of their researches calculated to strike the imagination. To one who reflects upon the importance of preserving our language in a state of purity, it is really surprising to see with how little compunction men are willing to murder it, or at least to subject it to relentless torture; and how little gratitude they entertain for those, who teach them to save their credit, by conducting themselves with more humanity. It is no easy matter to arrest and prosecute to judgment the foreign interloping words, particularly French ones, which are perpetually intruding themselves into our language, where their absence is much preferable to their company, with the aid, we must say, of some of our own writers, who ought to exhibit more patriotism and more discretion; but an achievement of this sort, wearisome though it be, is even more exciting than the task of pursuing doubtful etymologies far back into the dim regions of departed tongues, of establishing the local habitation of controverted accents, or of settling the questionable claims of suspicious letters to the residence in particular words, which they may have gained by accident or usage. The results of assiduous toil in this department of philology, valuable and even necessary as they are, are apt to be fatiguing to the laborer, while they are not very imposing in the eyes of others. When, therefore, we see a man like Mr. Worcester, willing to engage in it with the intensity of purpose, and fidelity of execution, that he brings to every subject upon which he enters, we owe him something more than a cold and formal acknowledgment; he is entitled to receive at least a portion of the commendation, which is not unfrequently bestowed by the public upon less important labors. In this country, in the absence of any such standard to preserve the purity of language as the French

Academy have established for their own, and having no reason to anticipate that any authoritative one will soon be provided, we must be content to rely, like our English brethren, upon the authority of individuals, whose influence in the estimation of the community will be proportioned to their talent, diligence, and devotion to their task. Among these individuals, a high place will be assigned, by common consent, to the author of the work before us.

Mr. Worcester's object, in undertaking to prepare his Comprehensive Pronouncing and Explanatory Dictionary, was to remedy certain defects, which appeared to him to exist in the works of a similar kind, generally used in our schools. The most prominent of these deficiencies were found in the number of words which these dictionaries contained, and in their definitions and rules of pronunciation. He has adopted the works of Johnson and Walker as the basis of his own ; but has given six thousand more words than are contained in the Critical Pronouncing Dictionary of the latter. A large number of technical terms employed in the various arts and sciences are given, with their appropriate definitions ; so are also many of the words from other languages familiarly used by English writers, but their foreign origin is at the same time indicated, and in various instances, the American or provincial uses of terms are pointed out. These are points, respecting which a dictionary is constantly consulted, and on which a deficiency of information is quite embarrassing to the reader. The advantages to be derived from the pronouncing vocabularies of scriptural, classical and modern geographical names, are quite obvious. There is, also, a copious vocabulary of words of various or doubtful orthography, accompanied by remarks and rules relating to that subject. The volume is very convenient in form, and contains about four hundred pages, printed in a very clear and handsome type.

Mr. Worcester appears to have been particularly solicitous to render his work useful as a pronouncing dictionary, and it is here that the want of a standard, of general authority, has been very widely felt. Owing to the circumstances which we shall presently mention, he has not attempted to establish his own work as such, in the many doubtful cases which are constantly occurring, and it is probable that if he, or any other person, should undertake to do this, the attempt would

be wholly unsuccessful. His system of notation, which furnishes the key to the sounds of the letters, is in some respects peculiar ; but it is as exact as any system of the kind can well be made, and imposes no great burden on the memory ; in point of preciseness, it appears to us to possess advantages over every other. As a general rule, he has adopted Walker's system of pronunciation, without hesitating to deviate from it where it seemed to him to be required. He has chosen to give words of various or doubtful pronunciation, as they are pronounced by several of the most approved orthoepists ; selecting in the first place, as his own, the mode which he considers the best, and then presenting other modes, together with the authorities by which they are respectively sustained. This course may be objected to by some, on the ground that it embarrasses the learner, by referring the choice among the various authorities to his own discretion ; but it appears to us less liable to just exception than any other would have been, and more likely to give general satisfaction, because the reader can endure with much more patience to have a question referred to his own decision, when the best means of forming a judgment are set before him, than to have a particular view of it presented as the only one he is at liberty to adopt. It appears, too, to indicate that Mr. Worcester has pursued his researches in a proper spirit, without undertaking to dictate, or to rely on his own judgment too exclusively. There is no other acknowledged standard of correct pronunciation, than that which is afforded by the usage of intelligent and refined society ; but this usage is variable, and differs much in different places, sometimes even in the same place ; what one regards as of unquestionable authority, another may declare to be sustained by no authority at all. It will hardly answer for a lexicographer to set up his own opinion, as an infallible standard of right, — the imposing dignity of the conscience of the lord chancellor did not prevent Selden from comparing it, as respects its fitness for a standard, with the foot of the same learned personage. Had Mr. Worcester chosen, in all doubtful cases, to select a particular mode of pronunciation, and to adhere to it without noticing the modes recommended by others, he would probably have satisfied nobody ; those who might agree with him in regard to the pronunciation of one word, would have condemned his mode as applied to a thousand others.

The subject of orthography is not without its perplexities. They were felt and lamented by Johnson nearly a century ago ; in the remarkable preface to his dictionary, he mourns over them with an affecting solemnity of tone, which gives abundant evidence of the anguish they had cost him. His task was undoubtedly a more serious one than that of any of his successors ; because before his day there existed no English dictionary, of authority in the slightest degree approaching to that of his own great work ; and the mighty lawgiver was sorely troubled to reduce his discordant and rebellious materials into any thing like uniformity ; but there is still a serious toil awaiting those, who undertake to reform his code, and apply it to the exigencies of the present time. Take, for example, the question of the propriety of using the letter *u* in words which terminate in *or* or *our* ; no great matter, perhaps, but one which illustrates the difficulty to which we refer. We avail ourselves of the research of Mr. Worcester to shew the want of harmony among the various lexicographers, as respects the introduction of this hapless letter. Johnson, as a general rule, retains it in the class of words just mentioned ; he even goes so far as to introduce it into the words *anterior* and *interior* ; but when he comes to *exterior* and *posterior*, which would seem to be quite as well entitled to it as the others, his heart appears to fail him, and he drops it. Entick excludes it from those words which are of direct Latin origin, but retains it in many others, derived from other sources ; in the word *arbour* he inserts it, and gives *armor* and *savor* according to both forms. The compilers of some dictionaries have chosen, as the safer course, to follow the example of Johnson ; but most of the later ones, as well as most writers of the present day, retain the letter only in a few instances. Dr. Webster, with a strict regard to uniformity, omits it wholly. Mr. Worcester has adopted the same course, but gives those who are dissatisfied with it the means of ascertaining and applying the rules of others. His remarks upon the subject of orthography are just as well as valuable ; and his vocabulary of words of various or doubtful orthography, taken in connexion with them, will go as far towards relieving the difficulties of the learner, as any exposition which could be easily devised.

The vocabulary of Greek and Latin proper names, which is appended to the dictionary, is founded on a plan similar to that

of Walker's Key to the pronunciation of such names, but is more complete and accurate. That of geographical names is still more valuable. Mr. Worcester, in preparing it, felt the very serious difficulties arising from the want of established usage in regard to a very large portion of the names, the disagreement of various authorities, and the uncertainty to what extent the English analogy should be followed, where it varies from the foreign in respect to the names of places in other countries. These difficulties render it impossible for any person to devise a system, that will not be open to objection. Mr. Worcester offers his own, as he observes, "with much diffidence, yet not without hope that, imperfect as it is, it may nevertheless be found of some use." Imperfect it undoubtedly is, and from the character of the subject, it is impossible that it should be otherwise; but it has evidently been prepared with great care and judgment; and will be found very convenient and, useful by all who have occasion to refer to it. It will not lead to entire accuracy of pronunciation, because no one can say, in reference to many of these names, what perfect accuracy is; but it will tend to remove much of the perplexity which almost every person must have felt, arising from his uncertainty respecting the pronunciation of words of almost hourly recurrence.

Without entering more at large into the consideration of the manner, in which this work is executed, we may say, that it gives evidence of the sound judgment and diligent research of its author, as well as of his philosophical spirit. The testimonials of its excellence are very numerous, and we doubt not that every one who may have occasion to examine or to use it, will concur in the opinion they express.
